



Department of Justice

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ATTORNEY GENERAL ALBERTO R. GONZALES ANNOUNCES SIX SITES FOR COMPREHENSIVE ANTI-GANG INITIATIVE

The "222 Corridor" to Receive \$2.5 Million in Grant Funds from New Initiative

PHILADELPHIA – Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales today announced six locations for a new \$15 million Comprehensive Anti-Gang Initiative that will devote extensive resources to defeating some of the most violent and pervasive gangs in the country.

The "222 Corridor" is one of six target areas chosen that also include Los Angeles, Tampa, Fla., Cleveland, the Dallas/Ft. Worth metroplex, and Milwaukee. Supported by \$2.5 million in grant funds per site, this new initiative will incorporate prevention and enforcement efforts, as well as programs to assist released prisoners as they re-enter society. By integrating prevention, enforcement and prisoner re-entry, this new initiative aims to address gang membership and gang violence at every stage.

"Every American deserves to live free from the fear of violent gangs," said Attorney General Alberto Gonzales. "The Department of Justice's anti-gang initiative will help us prevent gang membership, prosecute gang violence, and prepare offenders to return to society and resist the allure of gang activity."

The initiative was first announced by the Attorney General on Feb. 15, 2006, during his speech on the key priorities for the Department of Justice. The Comprehensive Anti-Gang Initiative complements existing Department of Justice programs to combat gangs and reduce gun-related crime throughout the country. Those programs include the Violent Crime Impact Teams, Safe Streets Task Forces, and the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) initiative, under which the number of federal firearms prosecutions has increased 73 percent in the past five years. This year, the Department will devote \$30 million in grants to expand PSN to include new and enhanced anti-gang efforts, and \$10 million in grant funds to support PSN's gun crime reduction programs.

"Gangs hold communities hostage and they are not just a big-city problem" said Meehan. "In fact, the threat to small and medium-sized urban areas is arguably greater because they are less equipped to dismantle violent organizations. In our case, Allentown, Bethlehem, Easton, Reading, and Lancaster are compact, industrial centers linked by the Route 222 corridor. Gangs use the easy access of I-78 to bring heroin and cocaine from New York City into these areas. This initiative, along with the existing successful partnerships between federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies will help stem the influence of gang activity in our area and has the potential to provide a model for combating gang violence in medium-sized industrial cities throughout the county."

The Eastern District of Pennsylvania's application for this grant was supported by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms; Drug Enforcement Administration; Federal Bureau of Investigation; Pennsylvania State Police; district attorneys of Northampton, Lehigh, Berks, and Lancaster counties; the mayors and police chiefs of Allentown, Bethlehem, Easton, Reading, and Lancaster; and the county executives of Berks, Lehigh, and Northampton Counties. The Eastern District will also be partnering with the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Middle District of Pennsylvania to combat gang violence in the cities of York and Harrisburg.

These six locations were selected to receive comprehensive anti-gang resources based on a variety of factors, including the severity of the gang problem, established infrastructure to support the envisioned prevention, enforcement, re-entry components, and existing partnerships prepared to focus intensely on the gang problem. United States Attorneys in the six locations selected today will be responsible for coordinating federal, state and local efforts under this initiative.

The Attorney General's strategy to combat gangs, which directed the development of this new initiative, is two-fold: First, prioritize prevention programs to provide America's youth, as well as offenders returning to the community, with opportunities that help them resist gang involvement. Second, ensure robust enforcement policies when gang-related violence does occur. Accordingly, each Attorney in the selected areas will work with state, local and community partners to implement strategies that address the following areas:

- *Prevention* – The Department will make available approximately \$1 million in grants per community to support comprehensive prevention efforts such as the Gang Reduction Program, which focuses on reducing youth-gang crime and violence by addressing the full range of personal, family and community factors that contribute to juvenile delinquency and gang activity.
- *Enforcement* – The Department will make available approximately \$1 million in grants per community to help support enforcement programs that will focus law enforcement efforts on the most significant violent gang offenders.
- *Prisoner Re-entry* – The Department will make available approximately \$500,000 per community to create re-entry assistance programs that will provide transitional housing, job readiness and placement assistance, and substance abuse and mental health treatment to prisoners re-entering society.